PEAKS OF SHALA

ooo above them, and here and there snow drifts flung up among smoky-gray clouds. Thirty-two waterfalls I counted from that window, veining the mountains with wandering streaks of silver.
87| But our gaze came back and fastened upon the school.

"I didn't know they had one in the mountains!" exclaimed Alex, thinking of her Mountain School Fund. "I thought our school at Thethis would be the first one!"

"Padre Marjan certainly said so when he walked down to ask us for it," said Frances.

"Perhaps this isn't a school," said I. Though it looked like one, the little square stone house through whose open doorway we saw rows of
[291] benches, and boys sitting on them, barefooted, wearing the long, tight, white trousers braided with black that hang low on the hip bones, the gorgeous sashes, and the short black jackets thick with fringe, that were white centuries ago, but were changed to mourning when Scanderbeg died for Albanian liberty.

It was a school. The pale, meek priest[1] in black, who is the bishop's ecclesiastical household, showed it to us with pride; he is the teacher.
178 The Turks and the Austrians had blocked all
87| attempts to bring schools into the mountains, he said, and the people, not knowing that schools existed, were naturally not eager to have them. But now the Land of the Eagle was said to be free, after so many centuries of Turkish rule in the valleys, and refugee children who had fled

[1] [bishop of Pultit -- Analyst]

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before the Serbs were coming back to their tribes 178
and telling about the American school in Scutari, 871
so that all the people wanted their children to
learn to read and write. The chiefs themselves, [212]
hearing that there was a Tirana government, and
not being able to write or read letters about it,
or to learn from newspapers (oh, simple-minded,
mediæval people!) the truth about European
politics, saw what education meant.

The people had taken rocks from the moun- 871
tains and made the schoolhouse. They had cut
precious trees and made the benches and the
desks. They had made a slate of a slab of the
native rock, set in a rough wooden frame; they
wrote upon it with softer rocks. From Italy,
across the Adriatic to Durazzo, up to Tirana, to
Scutari, and into the mountains—a two weeks'
journey by donkey and river ferry—the bishop
had got three copy books and a bottle of ink.
Pens had been made from twigs. The priest had
one book printed in Albanian.

Since the boys must herd the flocks in the [857]
mountains, they could not spend the day in 233
school. There is so little land that the goats and
sheep are fed from trees. The shepherd climbs
a tree, carefully cuts the tender branches, and
throws them down to the nibbling beasts that
eat the young buds and strip off the juicy bark.
There is no tree in all the mountains that the
shepherds have not climbed; not a tree that is
not a branchless, gnarled trunk.

So the school was open from six to nine in the 871

795 Despite its centuries in Ghegnia, Catholicism
182 has failed to change many of the customs of the mountaineers, such as the *fis* system with cross-cousin marriage, trial marriage, the levirate, blood brotherhood, and the swearing of virginity. The reason is of course that the needs which these customs fill have not been eliminated. The Moslem faith permits them and thus has become more popular. Islam is deemed the more fashionable and more civilized religion. The people of the towns, rich men, army officers, and other sophisticates are usually Moslems. Most Catholics are poor. This attitude is of course a hold-over from the period of Turkish domination. Many Albanians admired the Turks. Many spoke Turkish by preference. I recall once riding along a lane in Zadrima with my interpreter, Mr. Frasheri, who reprimanded 2 old harvesters whom we passed for talking Turkish together. Bishop Fan Noli suggests that they may have been Turkish-speaking refugees from the towns of Prizren, Peia, or Podgoritza.

[191]

795 There is a certain dietary difference between
262 Catholics and Moslems. The former eat pork,
273 especially in the wintertime. The Moslems curl up their nostrils and gag at the smell of pork, and will not enter a room where it is cooking. In its place they use much mutton fat in their cooking. Catholics drink wine when they can get it; Moslems care for their alcoholic needs with *raki*. These differences are probably of no biological importance, as far as the growth and development of the individual are concerned, but they do serve to intensify the mutual antipathy of the 2 religious groups and inhibit a genetic interchange.

582 In Lura, in a population not exceeding a few
178 hundred individuals, Catholics and Moslems
795 intermarry. In a single household the father may be Catholic, the mother Moslem, and the children will choose their own religions. This is the only place in Ghegnia where this happens. Lura is in process of change from Catholicism to Islam. As the latter gains ground, mixed households are found. The government of Ahmed Zog made much of this isolated situation, urging other Albanians to follow the example of the Lurans in the interests of national unity.

178 Various stages in this process of shifting are
795 found in different tribes and *bairaks*. In Mer-

178 795 [55] In Mar-

turi and Nikaj, the men adopt 2 sets of names, Moslem and Christian, and employ the former while traveling to avoid trouble. They get used to these names and in many cases use them at home. In Hoti, the *bairaktar* once led his men against the invading Serbs, with the help of the Turkish government. In gratitude for his brave and successful conduct the Turks granted him special privileges, and he went over, with his family, to Islam. The rest of the *bairak* is still mostly Catholic, but the tendency in such a case is for the others to follow the leader. In Lura, where mixed families are found, the Catholics have given up keeping pigs so as not to offend the Moslems, and celebrate Moslem festivals as well as Christian ones, to avoid trouble. Very rarely a Mirdite will marry a Moslem woman from Mati, but when he does she becomes Catholic.

797 144 When the Turks introduced Islam, all Ghegs were Catholics. Almost exclusively, the change has been in the Moslem direction. Hence we may assume that almost none of the present-day Catholics bear genetic elements brought in from outside the region by the Turks or their followers, while the same is not necessarily true of the Moslem Ghegs. *Bairak* by *bairak* and tribe by tribe, as conversion progressed, the line between the 2 religions has remained, by and large, a marital barrier. During the whole period of the Turkish rule, Catholics have furthermore been able to travel much less widely than Moslems, with resultant genetic implications.

771 In Albania one frequently hears the remark that "the Albanians are not very religious." This is usually said with pride, for the presence of 3 religions in so small a country is deemed a dangerous impediment to political unity. In one sense, the remark is quite true. Few Albanians are religious fanatics; few of them worry about their spiritual salvation. Most of the Catholics go to church with some regularity, and most of the Moslems keep Ramadan. However, their ancient way of life provides most of the ritual which they need to tide them over emotional crises, so that church and mosque are in many ways superfluous. A man's first loyalty is to his "blood," that is, his extended family. He spends much of his time, effort, and material goods keeping the family together and avenging any deed which has up-

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